

Child Impact Statement for:

West Tennessee Child Passenger Seat Outreach Program

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CIS authors assessing their own effort

The impact on children directly or indirectly affected by the effort will be:

Positive

The effort will increase resources, services, or facilities that provide access to or protection of assets children need in order to prosper.

Evaluation

Concerns:

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, almost 40% of children riding with unbelted drivers were themselves unrestrained. Unrestrained children are 4.2 times more likely to die in a crash than restrained children. Child restraint systems are often used incorrectly. One study found that 72% of nearly 3,500 observed cars and booster seats were misused in a way that could be expected to increase a child's risk of injury during a crash. Yet through appropriate and consistent use of child safety seats can prevent many of the vehicle related deaths and injuries among children.

The problem is non-use and incorrect use of child safety seats by a significant number of Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, and Asian parents and care givers. An estimated 85% of children who are placed in car seats and booster seats are improperly restrained.

The overall results of a 2007 National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) research note revealed that regional child restraint use was lowest in the South at 85%; in the Northeast and Midwest child restraint use was at 88% and in the West it was 94%.

Locally, Tennessee continues to have one of the lowest rates of child safety seat usage in the nation and unfortunately, one of the highest rates of traffic deaths as well.

The LATCH system in newer vehicles was created to allow for easier installation of car seats, but according to the NHTSA, many parents continue to improperly use the safety LATCH technology. The LATCH system was designed to better secure child safety seats in vehicles through upper tethers and anchors. This system is in place to reduce the tilting or rotation of the seat during a frontal crash. The NHTSA study revealed that more education is needed for parents on how to use the system correctly and prevent injuries or fatalities from crashes.

Justification:

Motor vehicle crashes resulting in injuries are the leading cause of death for children ranging in age from three to six and eight to fourteen years of age. In Tennessee, unintentional injury due to motor vehicle crashes ranks as the leading cause of infant death.

A properly installed child safety seat can reduce the mortality of infants by 71% and toddlers 54%. When used correctly and consistently, child safety seats can also reduce serious and life threatening injuries.

Goals:

An educated community is a safe community. The goal is to reduce the number of infant and child vehicular injuries, fatalities, and related economic losses resulting from traffic crashes on Shelby County's roadways.

Actions:

To reduce injuries and fatalities among children aged nine and under, Tennessee passed a progressive child restraint law aimed at decreasing morbidity and mortality from unintentional injury due to motor vehicle crashes. The law took effect in July 2004 and has been a catalyst for considerable efforts within the state to educate the public and hopefully induce voluntarily compliance.

Locally, occupant protection educations is a central tactic taken by the West Tennessee Child Passenger Safety Center (WTCPS) because it promotes and increases the proper usage of safety belts and child safety seats. The WTCPS takes these actions in compliance with the TN Governor Highway Safety Office to:

- *Educate, train, certify, and re-certify Child Passenger Safety Technicians.
- *Plan and conduct interventions to increase the appropriate use of child safety seats.

These interventions will be done through:

- *Conducting child seat inspections at sites in low-income and minority neighborhoods.
- *Providing child safety seats to parents whose car seat has been deemed unsafe (missing parts, on recall, damaged in a crash 30mph or more).
- *Providing culturally appropriate community education on proper restraint of child safety seats.
- *Demonstrate that rates of appropriate use of child safety seats increases over time with repeated interventions.
- *Develop improved educational materials and strategies by working collaboratively with community-based public and private agencies to promote the proper use of child safety seats in all vehicles.

Benefits:

Infant and Child passenger seats reduce the risk of fatal injury by 71% for infants and 54% for toddlers riding in passenger cars. Placing children in age and size appropriate car seats and booster seats can reduce serious and fatal injuries by more than half. How a child rides in a car may be just as important as external factors such as vehicle speed and road conditions.

Research

Safety involves the shared responsibility of citizens and government to reduce, prevent, and respond to threats, injuries, and the many forms of emergency. It also involves crime—that committed against children and that committed by children, youth, and young adults. Given the greater risk of injury and early death in higher-crime areas, safety is an essential pre-condition for a child's physical health. Tragically, it's the youngest children who suffer the most—from intentional and accidental homicides to neglect, abuse, endangerment, and abandonment. Child safety is therefore absolutely necessary for successful outcomes in early childhood development.

The CIS author reached a stronger understanding of how child well-being relates to the effort as they reviewed the assets listed under each domain they are concerned about. After reviewing the assets, the CIS authors conclude that Safety has been well considered in the plan. The author decides, therefore, to focus on the Safety domain to see if there are problems the effort can avoid making worse or, ideally, help resolve.

Nationally, car accidents are a leading cause of death in babies and children, as well as a major cause of permanent brain damage, epilepsy and spinal cord injury. In Tennessee, unintentional injury due to motor vehicle crashes rank is THE leading cause of death for infants. Most of these deaths and injuries can be prevented with the proper use of car safety seats. A sudden stop at 30 miles an hour can have the same crushing force on your child's brain and body as a fall from a three story building. Tennessee State law (TCA 55-9-602 & 603) requires all children under age eight or weighing less than 4'9" tall to be placed in a federally approved child restraint system when riding in the car.

This program has historically worked collaboratively with LeBonheur Children's Hospital's SafeKids Worldwide, Memphis and Shelby County Health Department Child Passenger Seat program, as well as all West Tennessee law enforcement agencies as partners of the West which meets quarterly.